



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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PARAMOUR POLICY 12-30-2004

Allegations of physical abuse -- This policy establishes procedural guidelines for the screening and investigation of alleged incidents of child abuse and neglect where a paramour is, or is suspected of being, part of the family unit, and is identified as an alleged perpetrator of physical abuse of a child.

Statistics have demonstrated that a disproportionately high number of serious child injuries and child deaths are directly caused by a single parent's paramour. Based on this trend, CP&P gives all abuse and neglect allegations involving a parent's paramours a higher level of investigation.

The Department of Children and Families continues to reach out to partner agencies in the community, to raise awareness of this alarming trend.

Responsibility

Action Required

SCR Screener

Identification of paramour-involved families at screening -- Identify reports of alleged paramour-inflicted physical abuse when screening calls at the State Central Registry.

Initiate a criminal background inquiry -- conduct a Promis/Gavel check against the paramour's name -- for reports of physical abuse or risk of physical abuse where a paramour is identified as the alleged perpetrator.

Child Protective Investigator

Determine paramour involvement during investigation -- When

investigating a child abuse report in a single-parent household, assess to determine if a paramour is involved with the parent and children, regardless of whether there is acknowledgement by the family that a paramour lives in the household or is significantly involved with the parent and children

If you learn of a paramour's involvement, conduct a criminal history check against his or her name. Do a Promis/Gavel check, or take other action, as applicable, to ascertain whether the paramour has a criminal history. (Note: SCR conducts the Promis/Gavel check when a paramour is identified at screening. See [CP&P-II-A-1-100](#).) For policy regarding the procedure to request adult probation records from the Probation Services Division, see [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#), Procedure to Request Adult Probation Records.

The process includes gathering and assessing information from the parent, children, extended family members, the reporter, school personnel, and others familiar with the family, in order to make an informed assessment as to whether a paramour is involved with the family. Include this essential information when you develop viable safety and service plans.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CPS INVESTIGATION 4-1-2013

Responsibility

Child Protective Investigator

Action Required

When investigating allegations in a paramour-involved household, interview the children as follows (in addition to investigation procedures outlined in CPS policy):

- Assess child safety in accordance with this policy.
- Interview the child victim, his or her siblings, and other children in the household outside the home, whenever possible, and always without the paramour and/or the parent present.

-Consider interviewing the child victim in the county's Child Advocacy Center, operated under the supervision of the County Prosecutor's Office, particularly if the injury/abuse is serious.

Consult County Prosecutor Office staff.

-Consider interviewing the child victim in the Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center assigned to the jurisdiction served by your Local Office.

Follow local protocols to access the center.

See [CP&P-II-C-2-600](#).

- Conduct the interview in a neutral setting whenever possible, such as a school, day care center, extended family home, CP&P office or any other environment perceived as "safe" by the child.
- If the interview must be conducted in the home, see the child in an area where the paramour and parent are unable to have eye contact with the children or hear the children's statements.

- If initial interviews must be held in the home, conduct follow-up interviews outside of the home.

Call the police if the paramour denies you access to the children, and the natural parent is unable or unwilling to permit or arrange access.

Interview the non-offending custodial parent as follows:

- Conduct separate, formal interviews with the custodial parent and his or her paramour.
- Interview the non-offending custodial parent who is fearful of his or her paramour in a neutral setting, away from the client home.
- Observe interactions between the parent and the paramour.

Make collateral contacts with individuals who can provide information concerning the safety and well-being of the children, parental functioning, the quality of the home environment, and the quality and stability of the relationship between the paramour, custodial parent and the custodial parent's involved children. Persons to contact may include, but are not limited to:

- Extended family members who have had extensive/significant personal contacts with the family consider contacting the paramour's extended family, if

identified.

- School, day-care and child care providers, such as baby-sitters, social service agency representatives, neighbors, church members, health care providers
- Corroboration of credible information -- Seek to corroborate credible information from collateral information sources concerning a custodial parent's or paramour's history of alleged mental illness, domestic violence, drug and/or alcohol abuse, or abusive patterns of discipline, when the paramour or natural parent denies such histories.
- If you determine that the allegation is "Unfounded," re-interview the reporter and respond to any additional issues raised.

If you have any concerns, conduct criminal background checks and child abuse/neglect record inquiries in other states, where the paramour is known or alleged to have lived.

When preparing a "Not Established" or an "Unfounded" case for closure, proceed as follows:

- Observe pre-school and non-verbal alleged child victims within 72 hours prior to submitting your paperwork to close out the investigation.
- Re-interview verbal alleged child

victims within 72 hours prior to submitting your paperwork to close out the investigation.

- Observe the children to ensure no new marks are present

Note: These final steps are required.

Supervisor

Assure the child protective investigator proceeds as above-described before submitting the report to close out the investigation.

You have the authority to waive these requirements. If you determine that the steps are not necessary, document your decision on a web-based Contact Sheet, CP&P Form [26-52](#), in the electronic case record.

CHILD SAFETY

4-1-2013

Responsibility

Action Required

Child Protective Investigator

Consider the paramour when assessing child safety -- When determining child safety in a paramour-involved household, assess the characteristics of the paramour; the dynamics of the relationship between the custodial parent and the paramour; the custodial parent's history with this, and previous paramours and spouses; the custodial parent's capacity to protect his or her children from abuse by the paramour; and child factors that may increase the risk of abuse by a paramour. Consult your Supervisor.

Factors to consider in paramour-involved households:

- The paramour expresses

negative attitudes or behaviors towards specific children in the household (e.g., unrealistic expectations for behavior, demeaning verbalization, excessive corporal punishment, differential treatment as compared to other children in the home, etc.).

- The paramour has been previously indicated as a perpetrator of child abuse or neglect in New Jersey or in another state.
- There is a documented history of domestic violence involving the paramour, particularly if the domestic violence is between the paramour and the custodial parent. See [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100](#), Domestic Violence.
- The custodial parent and/or children express fear of the paramour.

Supervisor

When helping your Worker assess safety in a paramour-involved household, take into account the following factors, which may decrease the level of concern:

- The children are all over 10 years old. (Note: Children who are ages six through 10 years of age are at high risk; children who are younger than age six are at the greatest risk of abuse.)
- There is another adult in the home who is willing and able to assist with ensuring the safety of

the children. (Note: This person cannot have a criminal history or a history of "Substantiated" child abuse/neglect. If there is a history of Established abuse/neglect, weigh the mitigating and the aggravating factors in making an informed decision.)

- There is a restraining order against the paramour, barring him or her from the household.

Child Protective Investigator and Supervisor

Determine the Safety Protection Plan - Develop, together, and implement a Safety Protection Plan, as appropriate.

This plan may require that the paramour leave the custodial parent's residence during the investigation. Consider shelters or extended family for use as temporary living quarters for the parent and children in situations where they reside in the paramour's home.

Advise the custodial parent that permitting his or her paramour access to the children in violation of the Safety Protection Plan may result in the Division taking protective custody of the children and pursuing court action.

CONSIDER THE STRENGTH OF THE RELATIONSHIP IN CASE PLANNING 12-30-2004

Responsibility

Investigating or Primary Worker

Action Required

Consider the parent/paramour relationship -- The following factors indicate a positive relationship between the parent and the paramour, and should be considered in case planning:

- The custodial parent and his or her children refer to the paramour in positive, affectionate terms to others, such as school personnel or extended family
- The paramour refers to each child
- By name in positive, affectionate terms.
- The paramour is actively involved in child rearing (e.g., child care, transportation, extra-curricular activities, school conferences, medical appointments, etc.).
- Persons outside the home refer to the paramour as having a positive relationship with the involved children.
- Persons outside the home are able to provide examples of the paramour's positive contributions to the involved children's well-being.
- The paramour's family recognizes his or her involvement as a "parent" to the involved children who are not his or her biological children.
- •The paramour and custodial parent have established a joint residence.
- The paramour provides emotional support to the custodial parent and/or the children.
- The paramour provides consistent financial support to the family.

- The custodial parent puts the child's interest above his or her need for a relationship.
- The custodial parent has the ability and willingness to protect his or her children from abuse or neglect.
- The paramour is a willing participant in Family Team Meetings.

Family Team Meetings -- Hold Family Team Meetings, as appropriate, when determining child placement or service plan issues, etc. The paramour should be required to participate, unless child safety issues are apparent.